

May 16, 2005

ADVISORY

SUBJECT: Third Postponement of the 19th Plenum of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs

For the third time in the past fourteen months, the American Chairman of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC) has found it necessary to postpone the Commission's 19th Plenum. All of the postponements have been due to general disarray caused by a reorganization within the Russian Government.

BACKGROUND

For background on the previous postponements, please see the [DPMO Advisory dated 18 October, 2004](#). Immediately following the most recent postponement in October, 2004, the U.S. side began planning for a rescheduled 19th Plenum. The first decision the U.S. Chairman, Mr. Jennings, made was to hold the plenum in Moscow in order to avoid the previous difficulties experienced by the Russian Commissioners in gaining permission to travel outside the Russian Federation. In January, 2005, Mr. Jennings sent a letter to his Russian counterpart, General-Major V.A. Zolotarev, proposing that the 19th Plenum be held in Moscow in May, 2005. The following week, Gen Zolotarev replied that the members of the Russian side "categorically" supported a May plenum in Moscow.

In his role as the U.S. Chairman of the USRJC, Mr. Jennings proceeded to convene a meeting of the U.S. side of the Commission on 21 March, 2005, to discuss the goals and issues of each of the four working groups of the USRJC. Following the meeting, planning continued apace as the plenum drew closer.

On 16 May, 2005, the U.S. side of the USRJC learned that Russian President Vladimir Putin had signed an order eliminating the presidential Commission and replacing it with an "Interagency Commission for Prisoners of War, Internees, and Missing in Action." The order named General Lieutenant (two stars retired) Vladimir Shamanov as the new Commission's Russian Chairman. In addition, the presidential order dismissed the previously appointed Russian Commissioners, including General Zolotarev, and gave Shamanov until 30 June, 2005, to present a plan for a newly reconstituted Russian Commission. Given that there is no official Russian side of the USRJC at present, Mr. Jennings had no choice but to postpone the 19th Plenum again until such time that General Shamanov is able to assemble a Russian side.

THE FUTURE

The U.S. side will seek a meetings with General Shamanov before he submits his recommendations to President Putin. Following that meeting and the reconstitution of the Russian side, Mr. Jennings hopes to reschedule the 19th Plenum as soon as possible.